

The Interfaith Alliance  
1012 14<sup>th</sup> Street, NW Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20005

November 14, 2001

United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of The Interfaith Alliance, a nonpartisan national grassroots clergy-led organization representing people from over 50 faith traditions, I write to you today to urge you to oppose H. Con. Res. 239 that would encourage government-sanctioned school prayer.

This resolution is as disturbing as it is unneeded. Students already have the constitutional right to pray voluntarily in public schools and do so every day. Now is not the time for some members of Congress to take advantage of the American people's massive and demonstrative affirmation of the importance of faith. In this troubled time, it is unconscionable that some congressional members are trying to achieve through a resolution what they have not been able to achieve through legislation. Manipulating the emotions and anxieties of a national tragedy, these congressional leaders are attempting to circumvent the constitution and establish government-mandated prayer.

Public schools have a tremendously important role to play in helping the nation move beyond this time of crisis. The classroom is an indispensable venue for teaching tolerance, advancing understanding of various religious traditions, and giving students an opportunity to discuss strategies for dealing with diversity. But neither now nor at any other time does the nation or religion benefit from government officials instructing students to pray or to reflect.

If, in response to terrorist attacks, the nation turns away from the constitutional principle of religious liberty that has contributed so substantially to the vitality of religion in this nation, we will have destroyed a major component of the freedom for which our armed forces are so courageously fighting and for which people of faith across the land are so fervently praying.

I urge you to protect the American ideal of religious liberty and reject H. Con. Res. 239.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Welton Gaddy".

Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy  
Executive Director  
The Interfaith Alliance